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Extract from American Archives
Ethan Allen Narrative

Early in the fall of the year, the little Army, under the Command of the Generals Schuyler and Montgomery, were ordered to advance into Canada. I was at Ticonderoga when this order arrived; and the Generals, with most of the Field-Officers, requested me to attend them in the Expedition; and though at that time I had no commission from Congress, yet they engaged me, that I should be considered as an officer the same as though I had a commission; and should, as occasion might require, command certain detachments of the Army. This I considered as an honourable offer, and did not hesitate to comply with it, and advanced with the Army to Isle-aux-Noix; from whence I was ordered by the General to go in company with Major Brown, and certain interpreters, through the woods into Canada, with letters to the Canadians, and to let them know that the design of the Army was only against the English garrisons, and not the Country, their liberties, or religion; and having, through much danger, negotiated this business. I returned to the Isle-aux-Noix the fore part of September, when General Schuyler returned to Albany, and in consequence the command devolved upon General Montgomery, whom I assisted in laying a line of circumvallation round the fortress St. John's. After which, I was ordered by the General to make a second tour into Canada, upon nearly the same design as before; and withal to observe the disposition, designs, and movements of the inhabitants of the Country. This reconnaitre I undertook with reluctance, choosing rather to assist at the siege of St. John's, which was then closely invested; but my esteem for the Generals person, and opinion of him as a politician and brave officer, induced me to proceed.

I passed through all the Parishes on the River Sorel to a Parish at the mouth of the same, which is called by the same name praching politicks; and went from thence acrop the Sorel to the River St Lawrence and up the river through the Parishes to Longueil and do fair met with good success as an itinerant. In this round, my guard were Canadians my interpreter and some few excepted. On the morning of the 24th day of September, I set out, with my guard of about 80 men. from Longueil, to go to La Prairie, from whence I determined to go to General Montgomery's camp; but had not advanced two miles before I met with Maj. Brown, who has since been advanced to the rank of Colonel. who desired me to halt, saying he had something of importance to communicate to me and my confidants; upon which I halted the party and went into an house; and took a private with him and several of my associates. where Colonel Brown proposed that, "Provided I would return to Longueil and procure some canoes. so as to crop the River St Lawrence a little north of Montreal, he would crop it a little south of the Town with near two hundred men; as he had boats sufficient; and that we would make ourselves masters of Montreal" This plan was readily approved by me and those ~~of the~~ in council; and in consequence of which I returned to Longueil, collected a few canoes, and added about thirty English Americans to my party, and croped the river in the night of the 24th agreable to the proposed plan. My whole party, at this time consisted of about one hundred and ten men, near Eighty of whome were Canadians. We were the most of the night — croping the river as we had so few canoes that they had to pass and repass three times, to carry my party acrop. Soon after day-break, I set a guard between me and the Town, with special orders to let no person pass or repass them. and another guard on the other end of the road with like

directions; in the mean time. I reconnoitred the best ground to make a defence, expecting Colonel Brown's party was landed on the other side of the Town, he having, the day before, agreed to give three huzzas with his men early in the morning, which signal I was to return, that we might each know that both parties were landed; but the day, by this time being near two hours high, and the sign failing, I began to conclude myself to be in a premunire, and would have crossed the river back again, but I knew the enemy would have discovered such an attempt as there could not more than one third part of my Troops cross at one time, the other two-thirds would of course fall into their hands. This I could not reconcile to my own feelings as a man, much less as an officer: I therefore concluded to maintain the ground, if possible, and all to fare alike. In consequence of this resolution, I dispatched to messengers, one to La Prairie, to Colonel Brown and the other to L'Assomption a French settlement to Mr Walker, who was in our interest, requesting their speedy assistance, giving them at the same time, to understand my critical situation. In the mean time sundry persons came to my guards pretending to be friends, but by them were taken prisoners and brought to me. These I ordered to confinement, till their friendship could be farther confirmed, for I was jealous they were spies as they ~~afterwards~~ proved to be afterwards: One of the principle of them making his escape, exposed the weakness of my party, which was the final cause of my misfortune; for I have since been informed that Mr Walker, agreeable to my desire, exerted himself, and had raised a considerable number of men for my assistance, which brought him into difficulty afterwards, but, upon hearing of my misfortune, he disbanded them again

The Town of Montreal was in great tumult. General Carleton and the royal party made every preparation to go on board their vessels of force. as I was afterwards informed; but the spy escaping from my guard to the Town occasioned an alteration in their policy emboldened General Carleton to send a force out against me. I had previously chosen my ground; but when I saw the number of the enemy, as they sallied out of the Town, I perceived it would be a day of trouble, if not of rebuke. but I had no chance to flee, as Montreal was situated on an island, and the River St Laurence cut off my communication to General Montgomery's camp. I encouraged my soldiery to bravely defend themselves. that we should soon have help, and that we should be able to keep the ground, if no more. This, and much more, affirmed with the greatest seeming assurance, and which in reality I thought to be in some degree probable.

The enemy consisted of not more than forty regular Troops, together with a mixed multitude, chiefly Canadians, with a number of English who lived in the Town, and some Indians; in all, to the number of near five hundred. The reader will notice that the most of my party were Canadians; indeed it was a motely parcel of soldiery which composed both parties. However the enemy began the attack from wood-piles, ditches, buildings, and such like places, at a considerable distance, and I returned the fire from a situation more than equally advantageous. The attack began between two and three o'clock in the afternoon, just before which I ordered a Lieutenant, by the name of Richard Young with a detatchment of nine men as a flank guard, which, under the cover of the bank of the river, could not only annoy the Enemy, but at the same time serve as a flank Guard

to the left of the main body.

The fire continued for some time on both sides; and I was confident that such a remote method of attack could not carry the ground provided it should be continued till night. But near half the body of the enemy began to flank round to my right; upon which I ordered a volunteer, by the name of John Dugan, who had lived many years in Canada, and understood the French language, to detach about fifty of the Canadians, and post himself at an advantageous ditch, which was on my right, to prevent my being surrounded. He advanced with the detachment, but, instead of occupying the post, made his escape, as did likewise Mr. Young upon the left with their detachments. I soon perceived that the enemy were in possession of the ground which Dugan should have occupied. At this time I had but about forty-five men with me, some of whom were wounded; the enemy kept closing round me, nor was it in my power to prevent it; by which means my situation, which was advantageous in the first part of the attack, ceased to be so in the last; and being almost entirely surrounded with such vast unequal numbers, I ordered a retreat; but those of the enemy who were of the country, and their Indians, could run as fast as my men, though the Regulars could not. Thus I retreated about a mile, and some of the enemy with the savages kept flanking me, and others surrounded hard in the rear. In fine, I expected, in a very short time, to try the world of spirits; for I was apprehensive that no quarter would be given me, and therefore had determined to sell my life as dear as I could. One of the enemy's officers, boldly pressing in the rear, discharged his fusee at me; the ball

whistled near me, as did many others that day. I returned the salute, and missed him as running had put us both out of breath; for I concluded we were not frighted: I then saluted him with my tongue in a harsh manner, and told him that, inasmuch as his numbers were so far superior to mine, I would surrender, provided I could be treated with honour, and be assured of good quarter for myself and the men who were with me; and he answered I should; another officer, coming up directly after, confirmed the treaty; upon which I agreed to surrender with my party; which then consisted of thirty-one effective men, and seven wounded. I ordered them to ground their arms, which they did.

The officer I capitulated with then directed me and my party to advance towards him, which was done; I handed him my sword and in half a minute after a savage, part of whose head was shaved, being almost naked, and painted, with feathers intermixed with the hair of the other side of his head, came running to me with an incredible swiftness; he seamed to advance with more than mortal speed; as he approached near me, his hellish visage was beyond all description; Snakes' Eyes appear innocent in comparison of his; his features distorted; malice, death, murder, and the wrath of devils and damned spirits, are the emblems of his countenance; and in less than twelve feet of me presented his firelock. At the instant of his present I snatched the officer to whom I gave my sword between me and the savage but he flew round with great fury trying to single me out to shoot me, without killing the officer; but by this time I was near as nimble as he, keeping

the officer in such a position that his danger was my defence; but, in less than a half a minute, I was attacked by just such another imp of hell. Then I made the officer fly [illegible] around with incredible velocity for a few seconds of time, when I perceived a Canadian, who had lost one eye, as appeared afterwards, taking my part against the Savages; and in an instant an Irishmen came to my assistance with a fixed bayonet, and drove away the fiends, swearing by Jasus he would kill them. This tragick scene composed my mind. The escaping from so awful a death made, even imprisonment happy; the more so, as my conquerors on the field treated me with great civility and politeness.

The regular officers said that they were very happy to see Colonel Allen, I answered them, that I should rather chuse to have seen them at General Montgomery's camp. The gentlemen replied, that they gave full credit to what I said: and as I walked to the Town which was, as I should guess, more than two miles, a British officer walking at my right hand, and one of the French nobility at my left; the latter of which, in the action, had his eye taken carried away by a glancing shot, but was nevertheless very merry and facetious, and no abuse was offered me till I came to the barrack-yard at Montreal, where I met General Prescott, who asked me my name, which I told him. He then asked me whether I was that Colonel Allen who took Ticonderoga. I told him I was the very man. Then he shook his cane over my head, calling many hard names, among which he frequently made use of the word rebel, and put himself in great rage. I told him

he would do well not to cane me as I was not accustomed to it, and shook my fist at him, telling him that was the beetle of mortality for him, if he offered to strike; upon which Captain McCleod, of the British, pulled him by the skirt, and whispered to him as he afterwards told me, to this import: that it was inconsistent with his honour to strike a prisoner. He then ordered Sergeants command with fixed bayonets, to come forward and kill thirteen Canadians, which were included in the twenty aforesaid. Sent one to the heart to dispatch the Canadians in succession a cause, in consequence of their having been true to me; they were wringing their hands saying their prayers, &c. recluded, and expected immediate death. I therefore stepped between the executioners, and the Canadians, opened my clothes, and told General Prescott, to thrust his bayonet into my breast, for I was the sole cause of the Canadians taking up arms - the guard, in the meantime, rolling their eyes from the General to me, as though waiting his dread commands to sheath their bayonets in my heart; I could, however, plainly discern that he was in a dispense and quandry about the matter. This gave me additional hopes of succeeding, for my design was not to die, but save the Canadians by a finesse. The General stood a minute, when he made the following reply: "I will not execute your name, but you shall grace the latter at

Tyburn. God damn you"

I remember I disdained his mentioning such a place; I was notwithstanding, a little pleased with the expression, as it significantly conveyed to me the idea of postponing the present appearance of death; besides his sentence was by no means final, as to green a halter although I had anxiety about it after I landed in England, as the reader will finde in the course of this history. General Prescott then ordered one of his officers to take me on board the Gaspee schooner of war, and confine me, hands and feet in irons. which was done the same afternoon I was taken.

The action continued an hour and three quarters, by the watch, and I know not to this day how many of my men were killed, though I am certain there were but few. If I remember right seven were wounded. one of them Wm Stewart by name was wounded by a savage with tomahawk. after he was taken prisoner and disarmed. but was rescued by some of the generous enemy, and so far recovered of his wounds that he afterwards went with the other prisoners to England

Of the enemy were killed, a Major Carden who had been wounded in eleven different battles, and an eminent merchant Patterson, of Montreal, and some others; but I never knew their whole loss, as their accounts were different. I am apprehensive that it is rare that so much ammunition was expended, and so little execution done by it; though such of my party as stood the ground behaved with great fortitude, much exceeding that of the enemy. but were not the best of marksmen.

and, I am apprehensive, were all killed or taken; [redacted]
the wounded were all put into the hospital at Montreal
and those that were not were put on board of different
vessels in the river, and shackled together by pairs, viz: two men
fastened by one handcuff being closely fixed to one wrist of
them, and treated with the greatest severity; nay, as criminals

I now come to the descriptions of the irons which were
put on me. The handcuffs were of common size and form, but my leg
irons, I should imagine, would weigh thirty pounds; the
bar was eight feet long, and very substantial. the shackles,
which encompassed my ancles were very tight. I was told by
the officer who put them on, that it was the King's plate, and I heard
one of their officers say that it would weigh forty weight. The
irons were so close upon my ancles, that I could not lie in any other
manner than on my back. I was put into the lowest and most wretched
part of the vessel, where I got the favour of a chest to sit on; the same
was reserved for my bed at night; and having procured some little
blocks of the guard, who day and night, with fixed bayonets watched over me, to put
under each end of the large bar of my leg irons, to preserve my
ancles from galling while I sat on the chest or lay back on the
same, through the most of the time night and day, I sat on it;
but at length, having a desire to lie down on my side, which
the closeness of the irons forbid I desired the Captain to loose
them for that purpose, but was denied the favour. The Captain
name was Loyal who did not seem to be an illnatured man
but oftentimes said his express orders were to treat me with
such severity, which was disagreeable to his own feelings. He
did he ever insult me, though many others who came on b

board did. One of the officers, by the name of Bradly, was very generous to me; he would often send me victuals from his own table; nor did a day fail but he sent me a good drink of Grog.

The reader is now invited back to the time I was put in irons. I requested the privilege to write to General Prescott, which was granted. I reminded him of the kind and generous manner of my treatment of the prisoners I took at Ticonderoga, the injustice and ungentlemanlike usage which I had met from him, and demanded gentlemenlike usage, but received no answer from him. I soon after wrote to General Carleton, which met with the same success. In the mean while, many of those who were permitted to see me were very insulting. ——— Allens Narrative.